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ABSTRACT

After an 3-year period of debate and consideration, Congress has reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Signed into law by President Bush in January 2001, the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act of 2001 will bring many significant changes to schools nationwide. The purpose of this brochure is to help educators in schools and districts understand the basics of what NCLB means for their reading programs. While NCLB reading programs focus primarily on Prekindergarten through Grade 3, NCLB also requires that students in Grades 4 through 12 make adequate yearly progress toward meeting state reading standards. The brochure lists the following NCLB reading programs: (1) Reading First; (2) Early Reading First; (3) William F. Goodling Even Start Literacy Programs; (4) Improving Literacy through School Libraries; and (5) Reading Is Fundamental-Inexpensive Book Distribution Program. It also cites five key concepts for understanding NCLB reading programs and discusses improving students' reading in Grades 3-6 through NCLB; improving students' reading in upper grades; and improving students' reading through NCLB-key questions to answer. (NKA)

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Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001:

CS 511 398

A *Quick Key* to *Reading*

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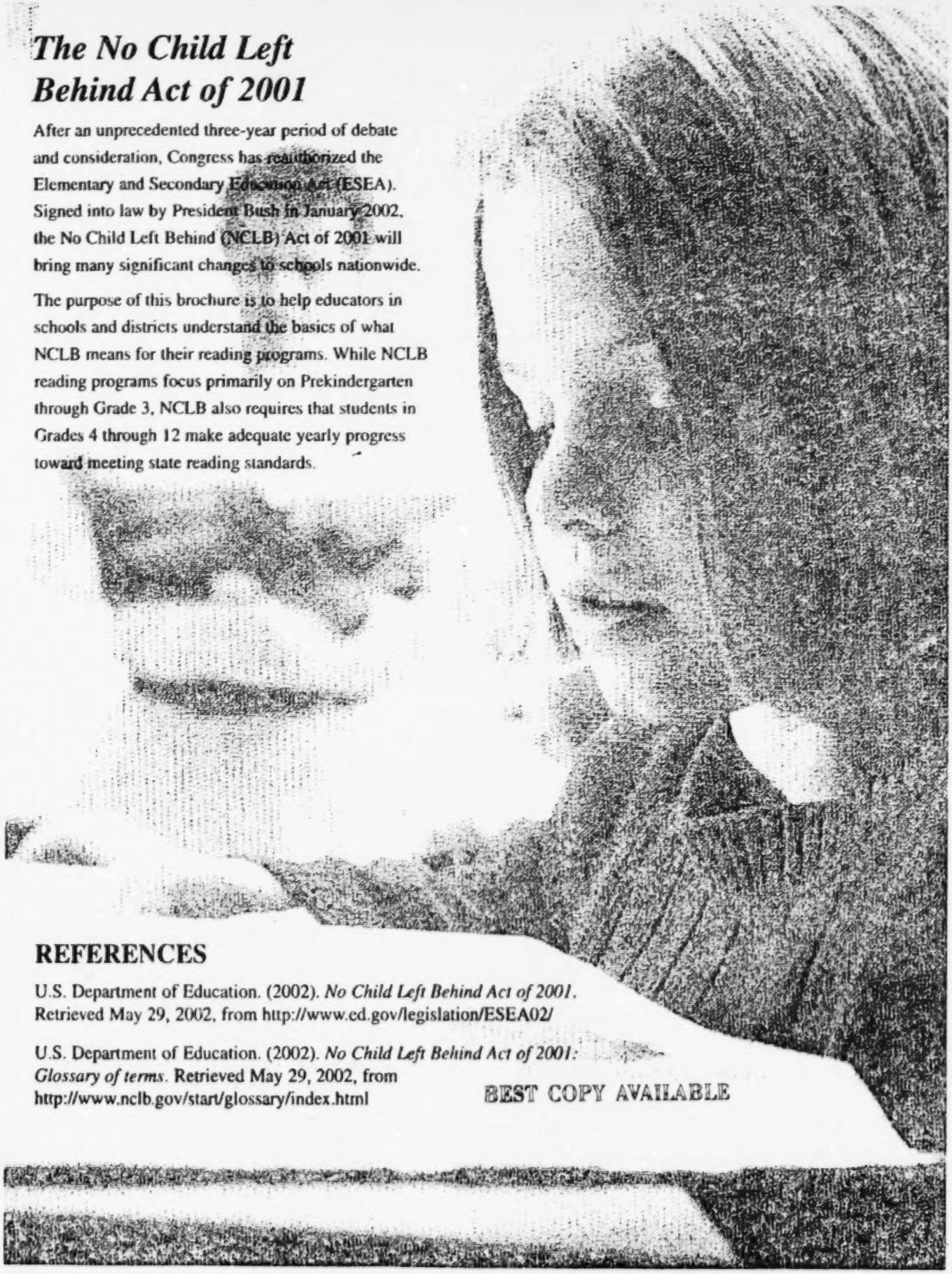
The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

After an unprecedented three-year period of debate and consideration, Congress has reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Signed into law by President Bush in January 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 will bring many significant changes to schools nationwide.

The purpose of this brochure is to help educators in schools and districts understand the basics of what NCLB means for their reading programs. While NCLB reading programs focus primarily on Prekindergarten through Grade 3, NCLB also requires that students in Grades 4 through 12 make adequate yearly progress toward meeting state reading standards.



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NCLB Reading Programs

1. Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1) focuses on students in Kindergarten through Grade 3, and:

- Identifies five essential elements of reading programs: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.
- Requires reading programs to be based on scientifically based research.
- Requires classroom-based screening, and instructional and diagnostic reading assessments.
- Provides funding for professional development.

This program targets districts and schools with 1) a high percentage or number of K-3 students reading below grade level, and 2) a high percentage or number of students living in poverty.

2. Early Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 2) focuses on preschool-age children, and supports local efforts to:

- Enrich children's growth of the knowledge and skills needed for successful reading development in kindergarten and after.
- Enrich children's early language and literacy development.

This program targets 1) districts serving high percentages or numbers of preschool children living in poverty, 2) public or private organizations serving preschool-age children located in these districts, and 3) partnerships of such districts and/or organizations.

3. William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs (Title I, Part B, Subpart 3) supports partnerships of districts and other public and private entities that:

- Assist parents with literacy or basic education skills.
- Help parents become partners in the education of their children.
- Help children reach their full potential.
- Integrate adult education programs with early childhood programs.

This program targets areas with high percentages or numbers of children and families in need of services from such partnerships as indicated by high levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and limited English proficiency.

4. Improving Literacy Through School Libraries (Title I, Part B, Subpart 4) provides support for:

- Updating school library materials.
- Acquiring and using advanced technology in school library media centers.
- Employing a certified school library or media specialist.
- Increasing after-hours access to school libraries.
- Providing professional development.

An eligible district is one in which at least 20 percent of the students it serves are from families with incomes below the poverty line.

5. Reading Is Fundamental–Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (Title V, Part D, Subpart 5) focuses on distributing inexpensive books to help:

- Prepare younger children for reading.
- Motivate older children to read.

This program gives priority to initiatives of local public agencies, including districts and schools, and local private nonprofit groups or organizations that will serve a substantial number or percentage of children with special needs, including low-income children, children at risk of school failure, children with disabilities, foster children, homeless children, and institutionalized or incarcerated children.

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Five Key Concepts for Understanding NCLB Reading Programs

All Children Reading at Grade 3

The first listed purpose of Reading First is "to ensure that every student can read at grade level or above not later than the end of Grade 3" (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1, Section 1201).

Closing the Achievement Gap

"Closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" (Title I, Section 1001, Statement of Purpose).

Adequate Yearly Progress

" 'Adequate yearly progress' shall be defined by the State in a manner that—(i) applies the same high standards of academic achievement to all public elementary school and secondary students in the state; ...(iii) results in continuous and substantial academic improvement for all students; ...(v) includes separate measurable annual objectives for continuous and substantial improvement for each of the following: (I) The achievement of all public elementary school and secondary school students; (II) The achievement of—(aa) economically disadvantaged students; (bb) students from major racial and ethnic groups; (cc) students with disabilities; (dd) students with limited English proficiency" (Title I, Subpart 1, Section 1111 [B]).

Annual Student Testing

NCLB requires that

"(i)...the same academic assessments [be] used to measure the achievement of all children" (Title I, Subpart 1, Section 1111).

"Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, schools must administer tests in each of three grade spans: Grades 3-5, Grades 6-9, and Grades 10-12 in all schools. Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, tests must be administered every year in Grades 3 through 8 in math and reading. Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, science achievement must also be tested" (No Child Left Behind Glossary of Terms—Assessment).

Scientifically Based Reading Research

"The term 'scientifically based reading research' means research that—(A) applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties; and (B) includes research that—(i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; (ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; (iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations" (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1, Section 1208).

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Improving Students' Reading in Grades K-3 through NCLB

Under Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1), district and school reading programs for K-3 students must include instruction, curriculum, and assessment on:

1. **Phonemic Awareness** -- The knowledge and manipulation of sounds in spoken words.
2. **Phonics** — The relationship between written and spoken letters and sounds.
3. **Reading Fluency, Including Oral Reading Skills** — The ability to read with accuracy, and with appropriate rate, expression, and phrasing.
4. **Vocabulary Development** — The knowledge of words, their definitions, and context.
5. **Reading Comprehension Strategies** — The understanding of meaning in text.
    - Must be based on **scientifically based research**.
    - Must include classroom-based screening, and instructional and diagnostic reading **assessments**.
    - Should provide ongoing, high-quality **professional development** focused on essential elements of reading.

Under Reading First, school and district reading programs for K-3 students also can focus on:

- Building students' **motivation** to read.
- Integrating **technology** into students' opportunities to learn to read.

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Improving Students' Reading in Upper Grades

NCLB does not specifically focus on improving district and school reading programs for students in Grades 4-12. However, under NCLB, districts and schools are accountable for providing reading programs through which students in Grades 4-12 make adequate yearly progress towards state reading standards.

Research suggests the following characteristics of effective reading programs for students in Grades 4-12:

- Highly qualified and well-trained reading **teachers** who understand the linguistic and cultural diversity of their students.
- Access to **reading specialists** for specialized assistance.
- Access to a wide variety of relevant and challenging **reading materials**.
- Explicit instruction in **comprehension strategies**.
- **Vocabulary** instruction that enables students to access word meanings independently.
- **Professional development** that is ongoing and high-quality and that supports scientifically research-based reading instruction for all students.

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Improving Students' Reading Through NCLB: Key Questions to Answer

1. What are the reading standards in your state and district?
2. What is your students' achievement with respect to the reading standards? What, if any, are the achievement gaps between or among groups of your students?
3. For all your students to meet or exceed the reading standards, where are improvements needed in your reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
4. How well are your reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned with the reading standards?
5. What is the scientific research basis for your reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment? For improvements in reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment that you are considering or making?
6. How well does your professional development connect to needed improvements in reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
7. What is the scientific research basis for your professional development in reading?

RESOURCES

NCREL, one of the nation's ten Regional Educational Laboratories, has resources to assist you in understanding and implementing NCLB in your school or district. Visit our Web site (www.ncrel.org) and our *Ahead of the Curve* Web site containing NCLB information (www.ncrel.org/policy/curve).

U.S. Department of Education

NCLB Web site, particularly for parents: www.nochildleftbehind.gov/
NCLB Web site, particularly for educators:
www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/index.html
Reading resources: www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reading_resources.html
Reading First: www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/readingfirst/
Early Reading First: www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/earlyreading/index.html

Reading Web sites

The National Reading Panel: www.nationalreadingpanel.org
The National Institute for Literacy: www.nifl.gov
International Reading Association: www.ira.org
Ask ERIC search engine: ericir.syr.edu/Eric/adv_search.shtml
Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement:
www.ciera.org

Your state education Web site is a key resource for understanding and implementing NCLB.

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